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ABSTRACT

In growing numbers of elementary and secondary classrooms, portfolios provide an alternative means of assessing both student and teacher progress. As students and teachers choose the components of the portfolio and become involved in their own learning and assessment, they become more reflective and more critical, thus facilitating self-assessment skills. Additionally, these portfolios enable others to evaluate the portfolio maker's work. It is proposed that administrators might also benefit from portfolio assessment. The administrative portfolio is a purposeful, self-selected collection of artifacts and reflective entries which represent an administrator's growth. The portfolio emphasizes process rather than a final product. It is the process that gives the creator, peer coach, prospective administrator, evaluator, or interviewer the most valid data. The collection and subsequent analysis serve three functions: (1) reflection for improvement and data-driven decision-making; (2) an alternative evaluation tool combining both formative and summative evaluation; and (3) an avenue for career advancement. The model includes a five-step reflection cycle of selection, description, analysis, challenging, and reconstruction. A graphic representation of the Administrative Portfolio Model, an outline of the administrative portfolio reflection cycle, and a list of summaative evaluation questions for the portfolio are attached. (JLS)

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Administrative Portfolios: A Contemporary Construct for Evaluation

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Administrative Portfolios:
A Contemporary Construct for Evaluation

In growing numbers of elementary and secondary classrooms, portfolios provide an alternative means of assessing both student and teacher progress. As students and teachers choose the components of the portfolio and become involved in their own learning and assessment; they become more reflective and more critical, facilitating self-assessment skills. Additionally, these portfolios enable others to evaluate their work. Based on the assumption that portfolios effectively serve these purposes for students and teachers (Vavrus, 1989; Tierney, Carter, Desai, 1991), it is logical that administrators could also benefit from this concept. This article defines administrative portfolios, proposes an Administrative Portfolio Model, and suggests three functions.

Definition

Tierney, et. al (1991) defines portfolios as "systemic collections by students and teachers that could help both consider effort, improvement, processes, and achievement" (p. 20) across a wide range of activities and explorations. Thus, the administrative portfolio is a purposeful, self-selected collection of artifacts and reflective entries which represents an administrator's growth. This collection and subsequent analysis serve three important functions: 1) reflection for improvement and data-driven decision making; 2) an alternative evaluation tool combining both formative and summative evaluation; and 3) an avenue for career advancement.

The Administrative Portfolio Model

The Administrative Portfolio model emphasizes a process of professional reflection which results in a product with practical applications (Figure 1). Portfolio development, a five-stage recursive procedure, moves back and forth, in and out, among the stages. The process of professional reflection involves selection, description, analysis, challenge, and reconstruction. Thoughtful selection of artifacts is critical for reconstructing meaningful experiences. Administrators must review and select documents which reveal the most about them and their work. During and after the document selection, description and reflection occur, with an interpretation or analysis of why each document was selected. Challenging the experiences and artifacts forces the administrator to determine the meaning of each piece and its relationship to his/her philosophy, values and goals. Challenge allows the final stage, reconstruction, to occur. Reconstruction, the utilization of the interpreted data, includes projections and goals for the future expressed through an action plan.

The model depicts process and product as recursive. Once the administrative portfolio has been developed, further reflection will occur, resulting in modifications of behavior. These modifications will reflect the growth of the administrator and his/her progress toward district expectations.

Administrative Portfolio Functions

1. Improvement and Data-Driven Decision Making

Administrative portfolios are catalysts for valuable self-reflection for improvement. Because the process necessitates a deep analysis of past events, new data are frequently uncovered. Valuable knowledge is provided for data-driven decision making in personal and professional relationships which impact program effectiveness. The portfolio can provide direction for enhancement in such areas as leadership practices, collegial and community interactions, and resource management.

2. Alternative Evaluation Tool

The administrative portfolio is a powerful alternative evaluation tool permitting both formative and summative evaluation. The development of the portfolio is a type of personal *formative evaluation* which is central to the professional reflection process. Figure 2 suggests reflective questions for each stage. This formative evaluation becomes collaborative when the peer coach or superordinate is involved in discussing and clarifying the significance of the artifacts and reflective entries. *Summative evaluation* occurs when the superordinate and creator analyze the portfolio to judge the subordinate's effectiveness and growth. The portfolio provides a concrete, comprehensive product typically not utilized in the administrator's evaluation and offers insights

into the individual's ability to effectively identify and solve problems. Figure 3 includes questions for the portfolio review.

3. Career Advancement

The portfolio is an innovative tool beneficial in pursuing administrative careers, seeking promotions, and assessing applicants. Products represent the candidate's strengths and accomplishments which might not otherwise be apparent in the typical applicant's resume or interview. For example, the administrative portfolio reveals information on the individual's philosophy, capacity for leadership and vision, commitment to professional growth, ability to anticipate problems and develop alternatives, risk-taking behavior, and willingness to accept challenging assignments. Questions designed for summative portfolio review may also be relevant for the interviewer (Figure 3).

Because the portfolio is an historical record of a particular administrator, it provides for other administrators or prospective administrators an authentic example of real experiences (Merchant, 1991).

Summary

The Administrative Portfolio Model offers a construct for self-improvement, formative and summative evaluation, and career advancement. The portfolio focuses on the accomplishments of the individual and the significance of events in the individual's professional development. More than a collection of artifacts, the portfolio emphasizes process rather than a final product. It is the process that gives

the creator, peer coach, prospective administrator, evaluator, or interviewer the most valid data. The Administrative Portfolio Model provides for a uniquely individualized assessment or evaluation tool which merits serious consideration.

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Administrative Portfolio Model

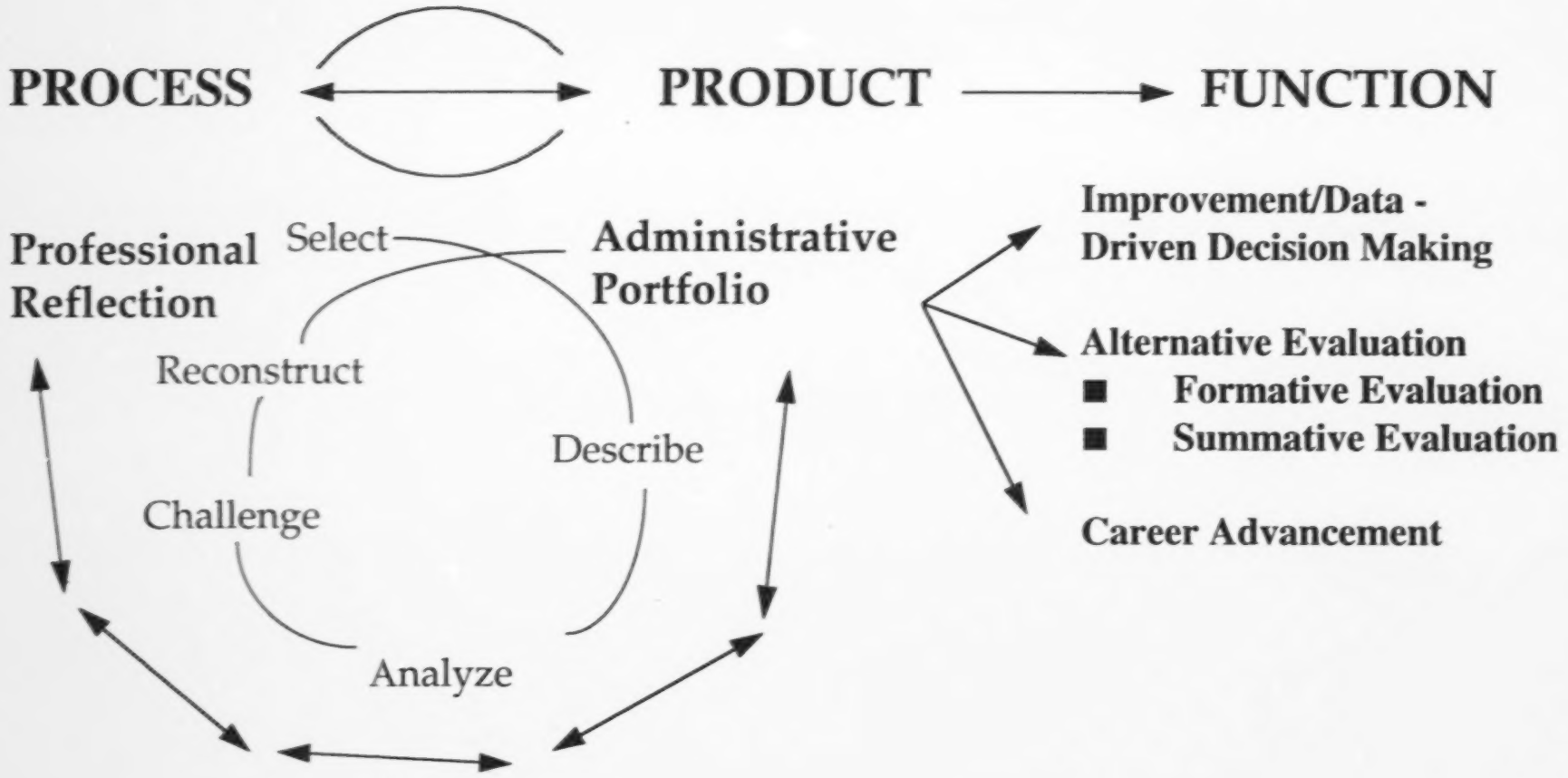

Figure 1

The Administrative Portfolio Reflection Cycle

1. SELECT

   Gather artifacts to review for the portfolio.

   Ask-Who is the audience for this portfolio? Examples: Principals, Assistant Superintendents, Superintendents, School Boards.

   What kinds of information will show success and growth?

2. DESCRIBE

   Briefly describe what this product or artifact is.
   Include relevant information--dates, events, participants, etc.
   (Who, What, When, Where?)

3. ANALYZE

   Why was the document selected?
   What does this product say about
   --me?
   --my leadership framework?
   --my knowledge and strategies?
   - --how I frame problems and analyze situations?
   - --how I solve problems appropriately?
   - --how I facilitate collaborative work and build community?
   - --how I manage and organize resources, time, and people?
   - --how I work with others?
   - --how I provide and receive feedback?
   - --how I envision goals and options?
   - --how I conduct research?
   - --how I develop curriculum?
   - --how I lead staff development efforts?
   - --how I make decisions and act upon them?
   - --how receptive I am to new ideas?

4. CHALLENGE

   Is this representative of my actualization of district expectations?
   Is this consistent with my leadership framework?
   Were my actions effective and appropriate in the situation?

5. RECONSTRUCT

What can I do to make my actions, decisions, etc. more consistent with my leadership framework?

What can I do to make my actions, decisions better fit district expectations?

What can I do to learn more about relevant issues and methodologies?

What can I do to improve my skills and strategies and to merge them with current "Best practice?"

Figure 2

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS FOR PORTFOLIO

Do these products show

-appropriate actions, experiences, activities, and accomplishments as related to district expectations?

-an active stance toward personal and professional growth?

-that the philosophy and actions of this administrator are consistent with district philosophy? with current research? with community expectations?

-an appropriate amount of intellectual and professional risk taking?

-an attention to appropriate form and appearance?

Figure 3